

breed about December or November, making a rude platform of small twigs for a nest, not usually above 8 or 10 feet from the ground, and laying two eggs, pure white, axis 1" 4^{'''}, diam. 1".

People have told me they have taken the young birds orange-coloured from the nest, and seen orange females. I regret to say I don't believe them!

C. victor feeds on many sorts of small and large berries and fruits, swallowing them whole.

GALLUS DOMESTICUS.

Among other presents left by Capt. Cook when he visited these islands, were enumerated Fowls; and some of the earlier navigators who followed him mentioned the fact of their having taken to the bush and gone wild. They are now found roaming free on many of the islands; and it was no uncommon thing to be greeted by a loud "cock-a-doodle-doo" as we wound our early way along the narrow tracks of the forest. Some of these descendants of the old stock have gone back to the "Game-fowl" colours; others still show traces of the "Dunghill." The natives catch them in snares and springes; but we shot some and captured a chick, which, with its mother and a rooster, I hope may form a group in the British Museum as a product of our new colony of Fiji.

STREPSILAS INTERPRES (L.).

Our short visit to Koro Island procured us a specimen of this bird, a female, in fine spring plumage. It is very scarce in the colony, and does not, I think, breed with us.

XV.—*Notes on the Ornithology of Fiji, with Descriptions of new or little-known Species.* By E. L. LAYARD, C.M.G., F.Z.S., &c., H.B.M. Consul.

As there are several collectors of birds now in Fiji, who are transmitting specimens to Europe and Australia, I deem it advisable to forward descriptions of such novelties as fall under my own observation, as they occur, for publication in the pages of 'The Ibis.'

MYIOLESTES COMPRESSIROSTRIS, n. sp.

This apparently new species is intermediate between my *M. macrorhynchus* and *M. vitiensis*, Hartl. ; but the remarkably thin compressed bill, with its very white base, at once distinguishes it. In size it is nearest to *M. vitiensis*, Hartl., being, length 6" 6"', wing 3" 4"', tail 3", tarse 10"', bill 12"'. In coloration it closely resembles *M. macrorhynchus*, but is rather redder in general tint, and *has the broad whitish tips to the tail-feathers* found in *M. vitiensis*.

My old servant, C. Pearce, who has been collecting in Kandavu, at my suggestion, has brought thence several new birds ; but as they are for Mr. Ramsay, of Sydney, I refrain from naming them. Among them, however, is a gigantic *Myiolestes*, far exceeding *M. macrorhynchus* in size, though resembling it somewhat in colour ; but its bill is the chief feature ; this measures, length 1" 3"', depth 6"', breadth at gape 7"'.

This variation is most interesting ; and I am convinced that had I the opportunity of working all of the larger islands of the group, I should find that each (or at least certain congeries) possessed distinct faunas.

Pearce informs me that my Green Dove (*Chrysæna viridis*, is *the* Dove of Kandavu ; and it certainly is not found elsewhere. He also has procured my *Merula bicolor*, *Petræca pusilla*, a new *Rhipidura*, a new Warbler of a genus unknown to me, and fine specimens of my two new birds, *Ptilotis provocator* and *Zosterops explorator*. *Z. flaviceps* is also found there, he tells me.

MERULA BICOLOR, Layard.

Of this species I can now add a more detailed description from specimens brought by Mr. Pearce. Length 7", wing 4", tail 3", tarse 1" 3"', bill 13"'. Throughout, with the exception of the head and chest, sooty black, not iridescent ; the whole of the head and chest is cinnamon-red ; bill and feet orange. The female is less brilliant than the male, and the separation between the red of the chest and black of the body not so well defined.

Mr. Pearce tells me they scrape about the ground under bushes in the forest, for worms &c., and are quite like Black-birds in their habits and note.

PACHYCEPHALA VITIENSIS, Gray.

Abundant at Kandavu, and apparently the only species there. Mr. Pearce obtained nests and eggs, shooting the male off one. The egg (a single one), hard-set, was large, irregularly marked at the obtuse end, somewhat in the shape of a ring, with large ill-formed purplish blotches. Breeds in September.

The nest is a coarse transparent structure of thickish root-lets, with here and there a patch of cobweb. No lining of any kind. External diam. 4", intern. 2" 6"; ext. depth 2" 6", intern. 1" 6"; placed in a low shrub between two lateral branches.

The genus *Pachycephala* is widely distributed over these islands; and the species composing it differ, as do those of *Myiolestes*; I am only just getting to have some clear idea of them. On Ovalau, and up the Rewa, the true *P. icteroides* (Peale) seems to prevail; but in the former place specimens are sometimes found with the yellow patch on the nostril that characterizes *P. graeffii*, Hartl., but the yellow of the underparts is not nearly so dark. About Tai Levu, on the N.E. coast of Viti Levu, a species is found with the light-yellow underparts of *P. icteroides*, but with a *perfect though narrow black ring* round the neck. I propose to call this *P. intermedia*, Layard, as it is intermediate between *P. icteroides* and my *P. torquata* on the one hand, and between the former and *P. vitiensis* on the other, the last-named having a *white throat*.

At Bua, on Vanua Levu, *P. graeffii*, Hartl., prevails, and on Tavuinui only my *P. torquata*.

I suspect that a close investigation of some of the remaining islands of the group will reveal other varieties of this genus.

Mr. Klinesmith has just discovered a new *Lamprolia* near Savu-Savu Bay, on Vanua Levu, which resembles *L. victoriæ*,

but is about a third smaller, and the head is entirely covered with the brilliant blue feathers. He has named it *L. minor*.

PTILOTTUS PROVOCATOR, Layard, P. Z. S. 1873, p. 28.

Mr. Pearce obtained at Kandavu in September three nests of this species, each containing a single egg. The nest is a light structure, composed of fine rootlets, and lined with bents of a thin wiry grass, with a base of cotton and feathers. Ext. diam. 4", intern. 2" 6"; ext. depth 2" 6", intern. 1" 6".

The egg is a pale salmon-colour, spotted throughout with dark red, and indistinct, very pale, purple blotches, small, and the latter grouped chiefly in the form of a ring at the greatest diameter. Axis 13", diam. 9".

It is singular that I have to chronicle two other Fijian birds apparently only laying one egg! Is this the rule or the exception? If the former, it accounts for the paucity of individuals one sees in the forest.

RALLINA PÆCIOPTERA, Hartl.

On the 9th October, 1875, a male and four eggs of this species were brought to me from the Rewa. The latter are of a warm brown cream-colour, marked throughout, but especially at the thick end, with irregularly shaped and sized spots and blotches, of indistinct pale purple and dry blood-colour. Axis 2", diam. 1" 6". On blowing them they were found just beginning to be hard-set.

The male, judging from two pairs I have in my collection, is rather smaller than the female.

The natives say this bird never takes wing. On the point of the spurious winglet there is a small stiff spur, black, with a white tip, and about half an inch in length.

STERNA MELANAUCHEN.

I am induced to give the following description of this species, taken from a fresh-killed specimen, as it differs considerably from that given by Jerdon in his 'Birds of India':—

Bill and feet black; tip of bill and claws *white*; eye brown; inside of bill (mouth) deep orange-red. The whole of the

under plumage suffused with delicate pink, which is visible even under the delicate grey of the back; it extends over the underside of the wings. An outer tail-feather, just growing, is a rich pink, deepest near the root, the shaft is also pink; this fades as the feather grows older and more elongated; outer vane of first wing-primary jet-black.

Shot on the reef at Ovalau, October 4th, 1875, by my son. Stomach contained bones and scales of small fish. Other specimens have since been obtained and seen; and on the 10th of October I saw what I am convinced were three examples of *Anous cinereus* (Nébourg). I believe that visits to the Yassawas and low-lying islands to windward would add largely to the list of sea-fowl inhabiting Fiji. I obtained *A. cinereus* abundantly, nearly twenty years ago, on the coral islands to the N.E. of Madagascar.

ARDEA SACRA, Gmel.

A reference to the synonyms of this bird, given by Drs. Finsch and Hartlaub in their 'Fauna Central-Polynesiens,' and Jerdon's 'Birds of India' (vol. iii. p. 748), shows the confusion that exists as to the identity of the Indian and Australian birds.

I perceive that Jerdon says, on my authority, that the young birds are *white*. I have not my notes of Ceylon birds with me; but if I remember rightly, after so many years, I found it breeding near Tangalle in tolerable plenty.

I have just obtained (2nd November) a pair of young ones, male and female, from the nest, of the species that inhabits these islands; and they are *dark slate*-coloured—much *blackier* and *glossier*, in fact, than a slate-coloured bird in full plumage, although long filaments of white down still remain on the head &c. Europeans and natives assure me that they breed in both phases of plumage, and that sometimes a *white* bird will be mated with a *blue* one.

It nests indifferently on rocks, on the ground, or in the mangrove or other trees that line the sea-shore.

Now, if the Indian bird is always *white* when young, and our bird is *slate*-coloured, may not that fact indicate that the

two are distinct? or are the white and slate birds only dimorphic varieties? Has any one seen the Asiatic race slate-coloured when in the nest, or observed the slate-coloured and white birds breeding together in India?

XVI.—*Ornithological Notes from the Neighbourhood of Buenos Ayres.* By HENRY DURNFORD.

THE following notes were made during the first five months of my residence near this town, and, under many difficulties, at such times as I could spare from other employment. The determination of the names of the skins I have made I owe to Dr. Burmeister's kindness, who has ever been ready to render me all the assistance in his power*. Most of my notes have been made at Belgrano, where I live, a place situated about six miles to the north-west of Buenos Ayres, on the shores of the La Plata. I have also visited other localities, the names of which appear in the body of my notes.

SYLVIIDÆ.

I saw two individuals of *Polioptila dumincola* on 10th October of the present year (1875), in some marshy ground near San Isidro. They were hunting amongst the reeds, somewhat like Tits (*Parus*).

TROGLODYTIDÆ.

Troglodytes furvus (called "Ratoncito" by the natives) is very abundant; it has a pretty little song, which it pours forth from the top of some bush, or perched on an aloe-leaf. On the 10th October I found eggs; the complement in a nest is usually five. The eggs are small and much speckled with red. I have seen many; and they differ considerably in different nests. These are made of bits of rush and grass, warmly lined with wool and feathers, and are generally placed in the stump of an old ombra-tree—the only indigenous tree, I be-

* [These names we have altered to correspond with those used in the 'Nomenclator Avium Neotropicalium.'—ED.]